



Ajinomoto Makes Moves With Advanced Products in Biopharma Sector

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Ajinomoto Co. Inc. (TYO:2802) is positioning cutting-edge operations as a driver of future business growth for its contract manufacturing of biopharmaceuticals.

Ajinomoto entered the biopharmaceuticals manufacturing industry in 2013 with its acquisition of U.S.-based Althea Technologies Inc., now known as Ajinomoto Bio-Pharma Services Inc. Since then, the company has begun full-fledged outsourced manufacturing for gene therapy drugs, and has established specialized facilities for the production of next-gen antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs).

Several gene therapy drugs have already been approved in the U.S., with drugs in the field expected to soon be approved in Japan as well. The state-of-the-art medical field that is gene therapy therefore appears to be on the verge of practical application.

Ajinomoto Bio-Pharma operates by collecting the DNA that makes up the key component of gene therapy drugs, then purifying this DNA and using it to manufacture active pharmaceutical ingredients that meet specified standards. With current contract projects having made progress through the development phase, the company's manufacturing volume is now on the rise.

Efforts have also been made with ADCs, which are next-gen pharmaceuticals that combine anticancer or other drug agents with antibodies that attach to specific proteins. To produce these ADCs, Ajinomoto Bio-Pharma has installed specialized tank equipment at a base in San

Diego, California, to facilitate the combination of antibodies, drug agents and linkers.

Ajinomoto Bio-Pharma began taking on outsourced orders at these facilities last year. With business inquiries from customers on the rise, particularly from U.S. customers, the company is now considering adding more production lines.

While antibodies generally use animal cells for their gene expression systems, Ajinomoto currently utilizes microbial expression systems for this. However, the company is thinking of adding animal cell expression systems to its lineup here as well.

In other efforts in the field, Ajinomoto is looking at moving away from procuring active ingredients and toward more in-house manufacturing. With the production of ADCs increasingly involving cross-border shipments of antibody drugs and highly active drug agents, cumbersome customs procedures have emerged as an issue. Ajinomoto Bio-Pharma therefore aims to become able to manufacture all the constituent components of ADCs on its own.